



# THE BOARD REPORT



2001-02: Issue 2

November 2001

*The State Board of Education met on November 7, 2001. Below are highlights of the November meeting.*

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

The Board adopted nonbudget legislative proposals for the 2002 Session of the General Assembly. A brief summary of the substantive proposals follows.

### Indoor Air Quality

- ❑ Provide school construction reimbursement for the remediation of any documented air-quality deficiency not specifically covered under state and federal codes when there is a determination by an appropriate agency that the condition does not meet published industry standards for indoor air quality and cannot be remedied through ordinary maintenance.
- ❑ Require all school construction applications to include an environmental site assessment, roof designs that ensure proper drainage and construction plans that address indoor air-quality issues and proven air-quality technology.

### Strategic School Profile (SSP) Report

- ❑ Eliminate the requirement that the annual report provide information on the equitable allocation of resources among schools within a school district. This information does not change significantly from one year to the next and is difficult to quantify for purposes of the SSP report.

### Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)

- ❑ Permit a school to record the CAPT results for each student on such student's permanent record and transcript, and require that a school note successful achievement for the appropriate component of the CAPT on the permanent record and transcript of any student who meets the statewide mastery goal level for such test component.

### Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program

- ❑ Provide that the two-year time frame for completing the BEST assessment begin when the person commences participation in the BEST Program, rather than when the person begins teaching in a public school. This change is needed to allow for extenuating circumstances that prevent a person from beginning participation in BEST as soon as he or she begins teaching (e.g., late registration by the school district or being hired later in the school year).
- ❑ Give the Commissioner more flexibility in extending the two-year time frame for completing BEST for good cause, by allowing him to extend it for not more than two years, rather than one.

### Pupils and Teachers of Racial Minorities

- ❑ Conform Connecticut state law with the categories prescribed under new federal requirements. The categories for race are American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. The categories for ethnicity are Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino.

### Reporting of Felony Convictions

- ❑ Require the state's attorneys to notify the Commissioner of Education whenever a person holding a teaching certificate is convicted of a felony.

### Bilingual Teachers

- ❑ Reinstate a one-year deferral of coursework requirements, renewable for two years, for bilingual teachers.

### Minority Teacher Incentive Program

- ❑ Expand this program to include minority students interested in becoming student support services personnel (e.g., school counselors, nurses, occupational therapists, etc.).

*(Legislative Proposals, continued on page 4)*

## **PANEL DISCUSSION ON CERTIFICATION IMPROVEMENTS**

Several questions and concerns have been raised by public school educators and teacher preparation program administrators concerning the current regulations concerning certification, and those scheduled to take effect July 1, 2003. Concerns include the inflexibility of some of the current regulations; the requirements for Praxis I and Praxis II; different rules for teachers prepared in state and out of state; issues concerning special education, early childhood and middle school certification requirements; and other policies of our law and regulations (e.g., rules for hiring international faculty members; requirements for teaching a minor assignment and/or obtaining a cross endorsement).

The Board invited several individuals to the November meeting to respond to two questions:

- ❑ *Are there specific certification regulations that prevent you from hiring or admitting qualified people?*
- ❑ *How can the certification regulations provide for increased flexibility in placing new teachers into appropriate classroom settings while maintaining and/or strengthening the skills and competencies of our new teachers?*

**Joseph Castagnola, Superintendent of the Portland Public Schools** and First Vice President of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), told the Board that a CAPSS subgroup has been meeting with Department staff members and teacher preparation program faculty members during the past year to discuss concerns about the certification regulations. These meetings were very productive and provided an opportunity to discuss the regulations in relation to district needs. He expressed the group's willingness to continue to work with Department staff members on these important matters.

**Jacqueline Jacoby, Superintendent of the Glastonbury Public Schools**, stated that the regulations are overly prescriptive in some cases and, consequently, inhibit positive change. For example, she noted that the Glastonbury Public Schools have encouraged kindergarten teachers to "loop" to Grade 1 with their students, allowing for greater continuity in instruction. However, the certification regulations do not allow elementary-certified teachers (Grades 1-6) to teach kindergarten. Another example Dr. Jacoby cited was the provision that allows teachers to teach in a minor certification area for only one year. Certain shortage areas, such as science, would benefit from teachers being allowed to teach in another science area for two years. She also suggested that the Board give more consideration to teachers coming from other countries, who enhance the educational experience of students, faculty and the school. She expressed her support for a provision that, considering their experience and credentials, would allow international educators to teach in Connecticut public schools for three years.

**Salvatore Pascarella, Superintendent of the Old Saybrook Public Schools**, stated that additional time (i.e., one more year) should be given to teachers from out of state to meet our certification requirements, as they also must adjust to their new job and living arrangements. Discussion ensued regarding the certification requirements for an out-of-state candidate in contrast to a candidate who earned his or her degree in an in-state college or university. Dr. Hilary Freedman, Chief of the Bureau of Certification and Professional Development, stated that out-of-state candidates with less than three years of teaching experience must take Praxis I and Praxis II and enroll in BEST in their first year of teaching in Connecticut. In-state candidates are required to take the Praxis I and Praxis II tests prior to being recommended for certification. Forty percent of our new teachers come from out of state, and school districts have voiced their concern about the high cost of hiring out-of-state teachers and the risk of losing them after the first year if they cannot meet our certification requirements.

**Richard Schwab, Dean of the School of Education at the University of Connecticut (UConn)**, stated that the UConn preparation program is very competitive and that the university turns away approximately three or four students for every one admitted to its five-year Bachelor's/Master's Program. Dean Schwab expressed his support for national accreditation of teachers, adding that there is room for flexibility without the risk of reducing standards. He expressed concerns about the certification requirements in special education for teachers seeking certification in the secondary grades, which he believes will discourage individuals from seeking certification at the secondary level, as they will add a substantial amount of time and money to their preparation program. The 2003 regulations would require

a teacher of a secondary subject area to also become certified in special education in that subject area. Discussion ensued regarding the benefits and practicality of a teacher being certified to teach both regular and special education students in subject areas (e.g., chemistry). One suggestion to address this is through team teaching – having both a chemistry teacher and a special education teacher in the classroom. Not only does this benefit all the students in the classroom, it serves as a professional development opportunity for the teachers, Superintendent Jacoby offered. **Cynthia Dubea, Dean of the Division of Education at Quinnipiac University**, told the Board that there is an urgency to address the special education certification requirements. The proposed 2003 regulations are “bigger than we are,” she stated. She urged the Board to reconsider the proposed requirements for special education certification.

**Valerie Lewis, Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education**, stated that students need to know at the beginning of their college preparation how much time and what requirements are needed to become certified, and to be well informed about what areas of teaching are most marketable. We must take a closer look at student mobility and the acceptance of credits from one institution by another, she added, to avoid delays and additional costs in becoming certified. Commissioner Lewis also expressed concern about allowing teachers to teach “minor assignments” and suggested this area needs to be reviewed more thoroughly.

The Department will continue its discussions with representatives of Connecticut public school districts and teacher preparation programs concerning regulations that will provide greater flexibility yet maintain Connecticut’s high standards for educators.

## **MIDTERM BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS**

The Board approved 2002-03 Midterm Budget Adjustments for submission to the Office of Policy and Management. Proposed budget adjustments include:

**Regional Vocational-Technical School System:** \$4,760,000 to comply with class-size requirements of the teachers’ contract; payroll shortfall; utilities; special education excess costs; and indoor air quality – staff training, planning and initial remediation.

**Response to *Sheff v. O’Neill*:** \$9,462,000 to support interdistrict magnets, Open Choice program, interdistrict projects, the six regional educational service centers, and recruitment of, training and support programs for minority teachers and administrators.

**Inflationary Costs of State-Funded Programs:** \$2,887,620, representing a 3% increase for both the priority school districts (early

childhood, after-school programs and early reading) and the charter school grant (to increase the per pupil amount from \$7000 to \$7210).

**Items Funded from Surplus Funds:** \$1 million for the Reading Institute; \$2.5 million for training in the use of technology for teachers and administrators; \$2.5 million for technology grants to towns; and \$1 million for summer school.

**Educator Quality and Support:** \$3.5 million for state stipends for mentors or mentor teams participating in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program; and a total of \$1.4 million for several strategic initiatives to attract and retain teachers and administrators.

While acknowledging that our national and state governments are struggling with significant revenue problems, the Board approved the proposed adjustments in light of (a) its statutory responsibility to meet the educational needs of the state; (b) an estimated and projected decline in the state share of support for education; (c) a judicial review of the state’s response to *Sheff v. O’Neill* (reducing student isolation), scheduled to begin in April 2002; and (d) the initial trial of *Johnson v. Rowland* (finance equalization and adequacy), scheduled to begin in March 2003.

## **LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS** *(continued from page 1)*

### **School Readiness**

- ❑ Improve fiscal planning by towns by providing that the amount of funds available during a fiscal year for program administration be calculated at the beginning of the fiscal year, rather than at the end of the fiscal year.
- ❑ Amend new staff qualifications for school readiness programs so that on and after July 1, 2003, there must be in each classroom an individual with an associate's degree or four-year degree in any subject area and 12 credits in early childhood education or child development, rather than an associate's degree or four-year degree in early childhood education or child development, as an alternative to an individual with a credential issued by an approved organization and nine credits in early childhood education or child development.

### **Family Resource Centers**

- ❑ Allow state school construction reimbursement and a bonus for construction of a family resource center in an elementary school, providing the space for the center does not exceed 1000 square feet.

### **Special Education**

- ❑ Amend the statutes to specify that local or regional boards of education are to make placements in private schools, agencies or institutions providing special education only if the school, agency or institution is approved by the Commissioner of Education, except that the Commissioner may give prior approval to placements in nonapproved or out-of-state facilities if he determines that there is no approved facility that is appropriate and available for a particular child; and make technical changes to provisions concerning such placements.

### **Adult Education**

- ❑ Eliminate the requirement that a local or regional board of education's eligible expenditures for computer equipment for adult education in any fiscal year not exceed five percent of the board's total eligible expenditures for adult education.
- ❑ Prohibit districts that provide required adult education programs from charging students for books or materials while allowing them to lend books or materials and require a deposit.
- ❑ Eliminate statutory language that allows districts to charge one another for certain costs (e.g., registration fees related to the provision of adult education).

### **Charter Schools**

- ❑ Allow the State Board of Education to approve exceptions to the requirement that teachers, parents and guardians of students enrolled in a charter school serve as members of a charter school governing council.
- ❑ Require towns to provide the same health services to students in state charter schools that they are already required to provide to students in private nonprofit schools.

### **Regional Vocational-Technical Schools (RVTS)**

- ❑ Allow retirees from the RVTS to be re-employed for up to 185 working days with no loss of retirement benefits.
- ❑ Require the State Bond Commission to act on bond authorizations for the RVTS at the Commission's first regular meeting following the start of the fiscal year.
- ❑ Allow military recruiting at the RVTS to eliminate the disparity with all other public high schools.

The Board also approved various technical proposals that will be included in its package for the 2002 Session of the General Assembly. Additional proposals will be submitted to the Board at a future meeting.

## **HARTFORD QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT**

The Board received an interim report on the Hartford school district's progress in implementing goals and objectives in 10 areas: (1) school and district management and accountability; (2) curriculum and course offerings; (3) instruction, assessment and school climate; (4) professional development; (5) early childhood; (6) technology; (7) student support; (8) parent and community support; (9) fiscal management; and (10) facilities management. Recommendations for improvements in each area were made.

State monitors are currently reviewing information pertaining to each of the goals, in preparation for a cumulative summary of the district's progress. The State Board of Trustees and the Hartford administration continue to move from developing new academic and operational systems to implementing and enhancing these structures, Commissioner Sergi noted. Assessment of student data and reporting of these findings need to be reflected in the district's annual report and need to be discussed regularly by the

Board of Trustees and the Superintendent at their meetings, Commissioner Sergi added.

Amendments to Special Act 97-4 were made in the last legislative session to provide the State Board of Trustees additional time to establish structural improvements in the 10 areas, and to transition to a local board of education. The tenure of the current State Board of Trustees now extends until December 2002. From December 2002 to December 2005, a partially appointed and partially elected Board of Trustees shall govern the Hartford school system. In December 2005, the Hartford Board of Education will be determined in accordance with the charter of the City of Hartford. The State Department of Education continues to provide ongoing technical support to the State Board of Trustees and school administrators, teachers and parents to achieve districtwide goals to "increase student achievement, enhance the quality, adequacy and equality of educational opportunities, and allocate and manage resources efficiently and effectively" (Section 1, Special Act 01-7).

## **ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION II**

The Board approved the Alternate Route to Certification II program administered by the Department of Higher Education, to be located at the regional educational service center LEARN in Old Lyme. This ARC II program will accommodate 40 teacher candidates in the shortage areas of mathematics and Spanish in the 2001-02 school year. This program is in addition to the ARC II programs currently offered on the campus of the Hartford College for Women preparing candidates for certification in bilingual education, world languages, mathematics and science. The program runs from October to May, and classes are held on Friday evenings and all day on Saturdays.

## **CHANGES TO PRAXIS II TEST REQUIREMENTS**

Effective November 23, 2001, candidates seeking certification in Spanish 7-12 will no longer take the Content Knowledge and Productive Language Skills Praxis II tests. The Board discontinued these tests and adopted the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) for a certification endorsement in Spanish 7-12. The Board set the passing standard on the ACTFL at "Intermediate High." This passing standard takes effect immediately. The Board's decision was made after reviewing the recommendations made by two groups of Spanish teachers, one which reviewed the Praxis tests, and the other which reviewed the ACTFL OPI. The ACTFL OPI reviewers found this test to be a more reliable way of testing an applicant and found the test to be free of cultural bias. The one-on-one style of testing allows the scorer to assess major skill areas with greater flexibility and according to clearly delineated standards.

## **MITCHELL COLLEGE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM**

The Board granted initial program approval to the undergraduate program in early childhood/special education (nursery through Grade 3) at Mitchell College. This is Mitchell College's first educator preparation program. The certification will allow candidates to teach students in nursery and kindergarten in both special and regular education, and to teach Grade 1 through Grade 3 students in regular education. The program was approved for a two-year period ending November 30, 2003.

**FULBRIGHT-HAYES GROUP PROJECTS ABROAD PROGRAMS:  
CHANGING CHINA: ECONOMY IN TRANSITION PROJECT**

The Board approved an application for funds to the U.S. Department of Education titled "Changing China: Economy in Transition Project." The \$66,158 grant will allow 15 teachers and a project director to conduct a field experience in China. Participants will document their experience while traveling in Shanghai, Shandong Province and Beijing. The funds will support the State Department of Education's initiative in international studies and exchange by responding to Section 10-27 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

The Board voted not to impose a \$1000 penalty upon Trailblazers Academy for its failure to submit its 2000-01 End of Year School Report for Charter Schools by the September 1, 2001, statutory deadline.

**VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL MATTERS**

The Board approved a Policy on Prohibiting Recommending Use of Psychotropic Drugs. This policy was adopted in compliance with Public Act 01-124, which requires local and regional boards of education to adopt and implement policies prohibiting school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any child. Psychotropic drugs refer to prescription medications for psychiatric concerns, such as attention deficits, impulsivity, anxiety, depression and thought disorders. Only school medical staff members may recommend that a child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, and school personnel may consult with such a practitioner with the consent of the child's parent or guardian.

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To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Public Information, 860-713-6525.

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**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION IS SCHEDULED FOR  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2001, AT 9:30 A.M.**

The meeting will be held in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. Visitors are advised to call the Office of Board Matters (860-713-6510) to confirm the meeting date and time.

**The Board Report** is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments concerning the format and content of **The Board Report**. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or [pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us](mailto:pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us)